

Message Text

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FOR CARTER FROM PA

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JAMES M. MARKHAM BY-LINER FRIDAY
AUG 26 NEW YORK TIMES HEADED, "U.S.-P.L.O. DIALOGUE:
CHANCES SEEM TO EBB."

2. DAMASCUS, SYRIA, AUG. 25--THE CHANGES FOR A DIALOGUE
BETWEEN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND THE PALESTINE LIBERA-
TION ORGANIZATION APPEAR TO BE EBBING, HAMPERED BY A GAP OF
MISUNDERSTANDING AND SUSPICION, DIVISION AMONG THE PALES-
TINIANS AND GROWING DOUBTS IN THE ARAB CAMP THAT THE UNITED
STATES IS CAPABLE OF DELIVERING A PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE
NEAR FUTURE.

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3. THE PRINCIPAL PALESTINIAN LEADERS AND THE EGYPTIANS AND
THE SAUDIS, AS WELL AS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, SEEM EAGER
TO OPEN A DIALOGUE, WHICH COULD BE A BREAKTHROUGH TOWARD
CONVENING A GENEVA CONFERENCE, AT WHICH THE ARABS INSIST
THAT THE P.L.O. BE REPRESENTED. THE AMERICAN CONDITION IS
THAT THE PALESTINIANS ACCEPT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION

242, WHICH IMPLICITLY ACKNOWLEDGES ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AND WHICH IS THE LEGAL FOUNDATION FOR A GENEVA CONFERENCE AT WHICH A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT WOULD BE DISCUSSED.

4. ACCORDING TO HIGHLY PLACED PALESTINIAN SOURCES, YASIR ARAFAT, LEADER OF THE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, CAME CLOSE TO ACCEPTING THE RESOLUTION DURING SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS R. VANCE'S RECENT MIDDLE EASTERN TOUR. MR. ARAFAT, THE SOURCES SAID, INFORMED THE SAUDIS THAT AL FATAH, THE MAIN PALESTINIAN GROUP, WOULD ACQUIESCE IF THE RESOLUTION WAS "INTERPRETED" AS RECOGNIZING THE RIGHT TO CREATE A PALESTINIAN STATE. IN TRANSMITTING THE MESSAGE TO MR. VANCE, THE SAUDIS REPORTEDLY MODIFIED IT TO READ "INDEPENDENT HOMELAND" INSTEAD OF "STATE."

5. MR. VANCE RESPONDED, THIS ACCOUNT CONTINUES, THAT IN ORDER TO OPEN A DIALOGUE THE UNITED STATES WOULD REQUIRE A STATEMENT THAT THE P.L.O. ACCEPTED THE RESOLUTION AND ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. THE PALESTINIANS MIGHT APPEND A STATEMENT OF THEIR OWN REGRETTING THAT IT FAILED TO MENTION THEIR NATIONAL RIGHTS.

6. IN THE SAUDI-SPONSORED EXCHANGE, MR. VANCE WAS REPORTEDLY ASKED IF THE PALESTINIANS WOULD BE INVITED TO GENEVA IF THEY ACCEPTED THE RESOLUTION, WHICH MAKES AN ALLUSION ONLY TO "A JUST SETTLEMENT OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM"; HIS REPLY WAS THAT WASHINGTON COULD NOT GUARANTEE AN INVITA-

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TION. THE REASON SAID TO BE OFFERED FOR THIS ANSWER WAS THE UNITED STATES' COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL, STRUCK AT THE TIME OF THE 1975 SINAI DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, WHICH GIVES THE ISRAELIS WHAT AMOUNTS TO A VETO OVER NEW PARTICIPANTS AT GENEVA AND SHARPLY LIMITS WASHINGTON'S MOVEMENT TOWARD THE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION.

7. CONVERSATIONS WITH A NUMBER OF RESPONSIBLE PALESTINIANS MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WHILE THE P.L.O. IS EAGER TO ENTER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, IT FEARS THAT POSSIBLE GAINS ARE OUTWEIGHED BOTH BY THE AMERICAN CONDITIONS AND BY AN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT UNDER PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN THAT SEEMS DETERMINED TO RESIST PRESSURE FROM WASHINGTON TO INCLUDE THE PALESTINIANS IN A SETTLEMENT.

8. "THE TREND IS TOWARD THE RETREAT OF THE AMERICANS IN THE FACE OF BEGIN, INSTEAD OF PRESSING BEGIN INTO A SETTLEMENT," SAID A TOP-RANKING PALESTINIAN. "UNDER THE RABIN GOVERNMENT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO GO TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE EVEN IF IT WAS UNDER THIS RESOLUTION. RABIN WAS OPEN TO A WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK. BUT UNDER THE LIKUD GOVERN-

MENT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HAVE SUCH HOPE."

9. BOTH PRESIDENT ANWAR EL-SADAT OF EGYPT AND THE SAUDI LEADERSHIP HAVE PRESSED THE PALESTINIANS ON THE ADVANTAGES OF TALKING WITH THE AMERICANS: IMPLICIT RECOGNITION OF THEIR ORGANIZATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ISOLATING THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. BUT THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT HAFEZ AL-ASSAD, WHICH IS CLOSEST TO THE PALESTINIANS AT THE MOMENT, HAS URGED THEM TO ACCEPT THE RESOLUTION. MR. ASSAD, WHO, IN SHARP CONTRAST TO MR. SADAT, HAS ALWAYS AVOIDED GETTING HIMSELF IN AN EXPOSED DIPLOMATIC POSITION, SEEMS TO SHARE THE PALESTINIANS' ANALYSIS THAT NO REAL BREAKTHROUGH IS IMMINENT.

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10. MR. ARAFAT, WHO HEADS A SOMETIMES TURBULENT COALITION, HAS CUSTOMARILY EXHIBITED SIMILAR CAUTION. HE ALREADY SEEMS TO HAVE PULLED BACK FROM A BOLD OFFER HE MADE PRIVATELY THROUGH THE SAUDIS: WHILE EMPHASIZING THAT HE TOO IS EAGER TO TALK WITH THE AMERICANS, HE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE INTERESTED NOW IN EMBRACING RESOLUTION 242 IN ITS ENTIRETY--A MOVE THAT MIGHT BADLY SPLIT THE RANKS OF THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, WHOSE COMPONENTS RANGE ACROSS A BROAD SPECTRUM.

11. AT BOTTOM, EVEN AMONG SOPHISTICATED PALESTINIANS, THERE RESTS A CONVICTION THAT IF THE UNITED STATES REALLY WANTED TO, IT COULD IMPOSE ITS PEACE SOLUTION ON THE ISRAELIS. RIGHT OR WRONG, THIS ATTITUDE PROFOUNDLY COLORS DECISION-MAKING IN THE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, AND THE ABSENCE OF VISIBLE PRESSURE BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION SUGGESTS A LACK OF WILL.

12. "WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND THAT AMERICA IS GIVING TO EVERY ZIONIST IN THAT STATE \$1,500 A YEAR, DO YOU WANT US TO BELIEVE THAT ANY REALISTIC ISRAELI POLITICIAN CAN SAY NO TO AMERICA?" ASKED ABDUL MOHSEN ABU MEIZER, A MEMBER OF THE P.L.O.'S 15-MAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, EXPRESSING AN OFTEN-HEARD SENTIMENT.

13. PRESSED REPEATEDLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE RECOGNITION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL, RESPONSIBLE PALESTINIANS INSIST THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY DONE SO, HOWEVER OBSCURELY, THROUGH THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN NUMEROUS UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS. "WE WERE NEVER AGAINST 242 BECAUSE IT INVOLVES DE FACTO RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL," SAID ABU LEILA, A LEADER OF THE LEFTIST POPULAR DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE. THE SHORTCOMING OF THE RESOLUTION, HE STRESSED, IS ITS FAILURE

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TO ADDRESS THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE.

14. SUCH BACK-HANDED ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST ARE CLEARLY INSUFFICIENT FOR THE UNITED STATES, WHICH EVIDENTLY WANTS THE P.L.O., AN ORGANIZATION THAT SPEAKS WITH A SOMETIMES-BEWILDERING NUMBER OF VOICES, TO MAKE A FIRM, UNEQUIVOCAL DECLARATION OF POLICY. THIS THE PALESTINIANS SHRINK FROM MAKING, FEARING TO GIVE UP MUCH FOR NOTHING.

15. FOR THE MOMENT, THEN, THE INCHING PROCESS TOWARD A PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN DIALOGUE THAT BEGAN IN LATE 1975 APPEARS TO HAVE LOST MOMENTUM, THOUGH THE BASIS FOR THE PROCESS DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE CHANGED. "THE ISSUE IS NOT WHETHER PALESTINIAN INTERESTS SHOULD BE EXPRESSED IN A FINAL SETTLEMENT, BUT HOW," ASSERTED A STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY PAPER TWO YEARS AGO. PRESIDENT CARTER HAS ADVANCED THE TERMINOLOGY CONSIDERABLY BY SPEAKING OF A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND, BUT THE GAP REMAINS. CHRISTOPHER

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